

back on it, this is only death: death will overtake us before heaven. The one thing that we yearn for in our living days, that makes us sigh and groan and undergo sweet nauseas of all kinds, is the remembrance of some lost bliss that was probably experienced in the womb and can only be reproduced (though we hate to admit it) in death. But who wants to die? In the rush of events I kept thinking about this in the back of my mind. I told it to Dean and he instantly recognized it as the mere simple longing for pure death; and because we're all of us never in life again, he, rightly, would have nothing to do with it, and I agreed with him then.

We went looking for my New York gang of friends. The crazy flowers bloom there too. We went to Tom Saybrook's first. Tom is a sad, handsome fellow, sweet, generous, and amenable; only once in a while he suddenly has fits of depression and rushes off without saying a word to anyone. This night he was overjoyed. "Sal, where did you find these absolutely wonderful people? I've never seen anyone like them."

"I found them in the West."

Dean was having his kicks; he put on a jazz record, grabbed Marylou, held her tight, and bounced against her with the beat of the music. She bounced right back. It was a real love dance. Ian MacArthur came in with a huge gang. The New Year's weekend began, and lasted three days and three nights. Great gangs got in the Hudson and swerved in the snowy New York streets from party to party. I brought Lucille and her sister to the biggest party. When Lucille saw me with Dean and Marylou her face darkened—she sensed the madness they put in me.

"I don't like you when you're with them."

"Ah, it's all right, it's just kicks. We only live once. We're having a good time."

"No, it's sad and I don't like it."

Then Marylou began making love to me; she said Dean was going to stay with Camille and she wanted me to go with her. "Come back to San Francisco with us. We'll live together. I'll be a good girl for you." But I knew Dean loved Marylou, and I also knew Marylou was doing this to make Lucille jealous, and I wanted nothing of it. Still and all, I licked my lips for the luscious blonde. When Lucille saw Marylou pushing me into the corners and giving me the word and forcing kisses on me she accepted Dean's invitation to go out in the car; but they just talked and drank some of the Southern moonshine I left in the compartment. Everything was being mixed up, and all was falling. I knew my affair with Lucille wouldn't last much longer. She wanted me to be her way. She was married to a longshoreman who treated her badly. I was willing to marry her and take her baby daughter and all if she divorced the husband; but there wasn't even enough money to get a divorce and the whole thing was hopeless, besides which Lucille would never understand me because I like too many things and get all confused and hung-up running from one falling star to another till I drop. This is the night, what it does to you. I had nothing to offer anybody except my own confusion.

The parties were enormous; there were at least a hundred people at a basement apartment in the West Nineties. People overflowed into the cellar compartments near the furnace. Something was going on in every corner, on every bed and couch—not an orgy but just a New Year's party with frantic screaming and wild radio music. There was even a Chinese girl. Dean ran like Groucho Marx from group to group, digging everybody. Periodically we rushed out to the car to